

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr on Friday introduced the "Ocean Research and Exploration Enhancement Act," a bill that would establish two important ocean research programs: the National Undersea Research Program and the National Ocean Exploration Program.

The two programs would be administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in conjunction with the National Science Foundation and other federal agencies.

"We know so little about the ocean, yet it contributes billions of dollars and millions of jobs to our economy," Rep. Farr said. "Locally, the ocean brings tourists to the Central Coast, sends our farmers the weather they need and makes our home a great place to live. Yet it's a sad truth that we know more about Mars than we do the ocean."

The two research programs will provide insight into marine ecosystems, organisms and the geology of the world's oceans. The legislation, H.R. 366, is intended to maximize ocean research effectiveness by integrating multiple scientific disciplines in the ocean science community.

The goal of the partnerships will be to share NOAA's facilities, technology, equipment, information and expertise with undersea research programs at universities. These programs will provide NOAA with the underwater presence it requires to fulfill its responsibility for managing marine and coastal resources.

"These programs offer us a range of benefits in the fields of research and discovery," Rep. Farr said. "The possibilities are almost endless, from underwater discoveries that could offer therapeutic benefits to the unveiling of shipwrecks and submerged sites that will increase our historical knowledge. One of the things that defines humans is our quest for knowledge through exploration and research, and I'm proud to introduce these bills toward that goal."

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